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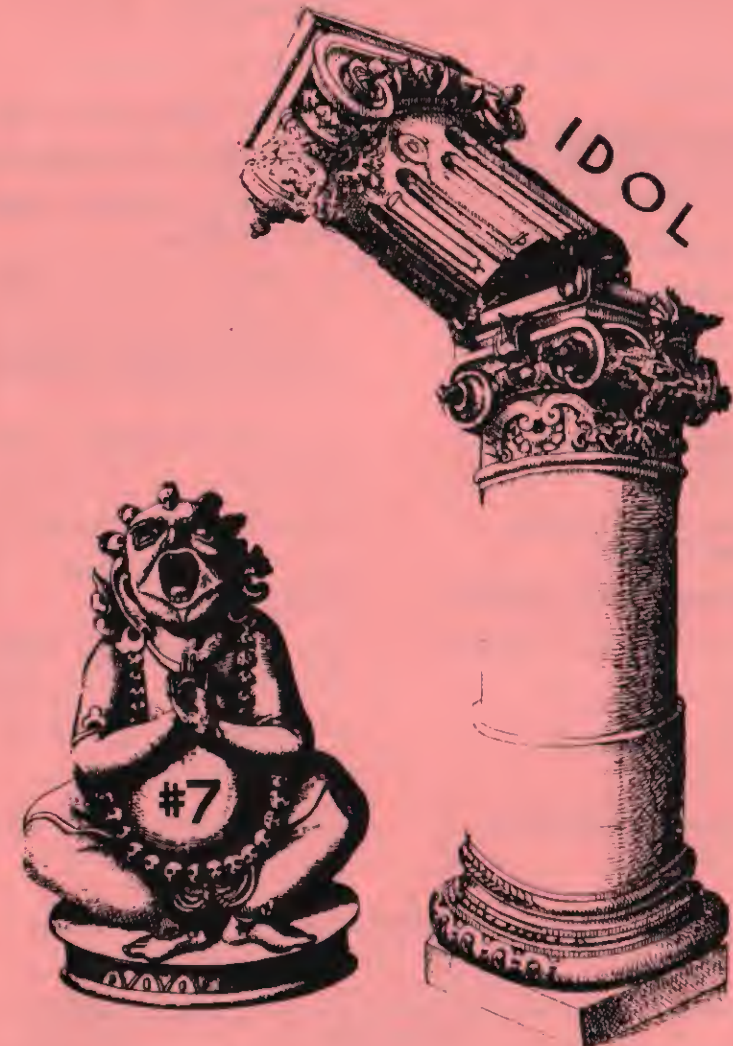
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IMPS IN THE INKWELL



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Überpoet | by Tim Blackwell

He sprinkles his pages with Nietzsche's pollen.
His teeth are Damascus white.

He danced with the last of the Hohenzollerns.
Danced them all into the night.



SATAN SEZ | THE EDITRIX'S COLUMN

It's a little bit like Penelope waiting for Odysseus to return: weaving every day and unraveling each night, putting off those damn suitors for as long as she can. I'm weaving a garment of my own, putting off the drones and clones of normalcy who pound at my door like indefatigable vacuum cleaner salesmen. Every day they pester me in a nasally whine, asking if I'm ready to come out and act like an adult. "Hell no," I say, pointing to the unfinished robe at the loom, "Can't you adenoidally-challenged idiots see I don't have a stitch to wear?"

I run around like a madwoman at night, skulking in gin joints, sashaying through candlelit receptions, mincing around half-full theatres and movie houses, pulling bits of fabric from the hems of all my saviors' garments. From

Assassins | by H. Edgar Hix

† † † † † † † † † † † † † † †

I envision uncovering your black-haired pyramid,
the Feathered Snake's coming,
the human sacrifices.

I am aware of the jungle between us;
if there were no jungle there would be no us.
The jungle is the thousand shades of black
that require no light for definition;
the jaguar defines them,
the parrot and the monkey define them,
the million unidentified species of insects
sing, crawl, bite, hide, eat, shit and die
them into existence.

I envision myself as the bloody-knifed priest,
not the gentle scientist who carefully uncovers,
catalogues, researches, analyzes, and
returns to the museum.

I wear the skins of endangered species.
I will wear the jade mask
in the underworld
where only Quetzalcoatl is unafraid.
Between us, we will feed the gods
the still beating hearts
cut from our chests.

We will be buried in trees for an eternity
and the world will not end for
the lack of our sacrifices.
Scientists will come.
They will find the bits of us we choose to leave
for their white eyes: clay and stone;
the hair, the heart will be in that invisible land.
They will envision us
as academically interesting primitives.
But, the Sun and the Moon will remember us.
The Morning Star will still know our red cries.

9th & Hennepin (Minneapolis)

All the donuts around here have names that sound like prostitutes. And the moon's teeth-marks are on the sky, like a tarp thrown all over this. The broken umbrellas like dead birds. The steam comes outta the grille like the whole goddamn town is ready to blow. And the bricks are all scarred like jailhouse tattoos. And everyone is behaving like dogs. And horses are coming down Violin Road, and Dutch is dead on his feet. And all the rooms, they smell like diesel and you take on the dreams of ones who have slept there. I'm lost in the window. I hide in the stairway. I hang in the curtain and I sleep in your hat. And no one brings anything small into a bar around here: they all started out with bad directions. And the girl behind the counter has a tattooed tear: one for every year he's away, she said. Such a crumbling beauty. Ahh, there's nothing wrong with her that a hundred dollars won't fix. She has that razor sadness that only gets worse with the clang and the thunder of the Southern Pacific going by. And the clock ticks out like a dripping faucet till your full of ragwater, bitters, and blue ruin and you'll spill out over the side to anyone who'll listen. I've seen it all. I've seen it all through the yellow windows of the evening train.

--Tom Waits



these stolen swatches and pinched pockets
I assemble my own coat of many colors.
My own radiant cloak of grace, beauty
and fully realized potential!

I've been inches away from finishing
countless times. But whenever I get
close, whenever I find my hand twitching
and that sneaky scissors in my grip... I
close my eyes, take a deep breath, and
pull the whole thing loose, letting the
kinky threads pile up around me like a
comfortable nest. In this makeshift
cocoon I brood on my sins and ruminate
on my flaws, wondering if I will ever do
or make anything worth a tinker's damn.

But the next night I'm out again,
scrounging for scraps of famous fabric,
tufts of holy hair, sneaking just a few
fibers of inspiration from my idols. And
I set to work in the morning, working the
motley pieces into a new creation, the
shuttle whacking and cracking along to the

beat of my own half-made heart. The key, of course, is to make a garment that harmoniously joins all the disparate pieces of velvet and fur, polyester and wool, in a unique and entirely new whole. In short, I need to both find and make my own identity; I am fashioning the warp and weft of my own heretical soul.

What's that you say? Of course not! We make ourselves, don't you know...

Every day and in every way. All the pieces are begged, borrowed or stolen, certainly, but the combination is always a singular, peerless creation (you!). Don't buy your fabric from those pesky salesmen of sanity, those door-to-door missionaries of the mundane. Smile when you turn the deadbolt and shimmy down your drainpipe, instead... I, for one, will gladly pick through the rags and make my own haphazard mantle of humanity, my own divine veil of hidden revelations.

from one street to the next, to the next. The bones buried six-feet deep below you roll like dice. The warehouse behind you settles and sighs. From above, a crow caws an obscenity. Cocking your head to the side, you hear the far-away clink of untuned piano keys and the soft blurry blow of a trumpet. A pair of sailors lurch past as you turn your head left, then right, searching for the source of the music. But all doors are closed, painted over. Windows are boarded shut, though a faded curtain waves lasciviously at you from a broken third-floor casement. Rust settles in a deserted loading dock and the dented dumpster on the opposite corner winks at you. You catch the scent of cigarette smoke and take two steps to the left. There's no one there, but a sudden whirlwind blows trash over your feet and a torn playing card sticks in your shoe. You look at your watch, but it's stopped at three forty-one. What time is it? Which way should you go? Where were you headed when you started out? Does it matter, now? It starts to rain, fat and heavy drops. The soft plink of the water on your coat almost muffles the hoarse whine of a man's voice, singing. It's the muted roar of a harlequin preacher; the quiet mutter of the hobo storyteller. Somewhere, the devil just whispered your name. A voodooienne finished burying a lock of your hair by the river. A letter you once wrote was just burned in an ashtray. You hear the sound clearly now and purposefully step off the curb. Into the crossroads. There's a moment of infinite possibility before you make your choice and your crepe-soled shoe grinds the seven of clubs beneath your foot. The ancient bones under the street shudder at your passage. At the crossroads, destiny shifts and fate is mutable. Over and over we are confronted with limitless options, unfolding rapidly like a blue-colored rose in a warm gin and tonic. A drum roll blends with the approaching thunder. A bird perched on the street lamp shakes itself disgustedly and flies away. You hunch your shoulders and stride forward, seeking shelter and the temporary fellowship of other lost pilgrims. You follow the sound of the prophet, wailing in the wasteland. Listen.

Let me fall out of the window with confetti in my hair
Deal out Jacks or better on a blanket by the stair
I'll tell you all my secrets but I'll lie about my past
So send me off to bed forever more...
--Tom Waits

calamity jewelz's Golden Calf Awards!

Desire / That is longing for the sea / Where the sea's a bar glass / Sucker size.

--Langston Hughes, from Trumpet Player

*You may bury my body / down by the highway side /
So my old evil spirit / can catch a Greyhound bus and ride*

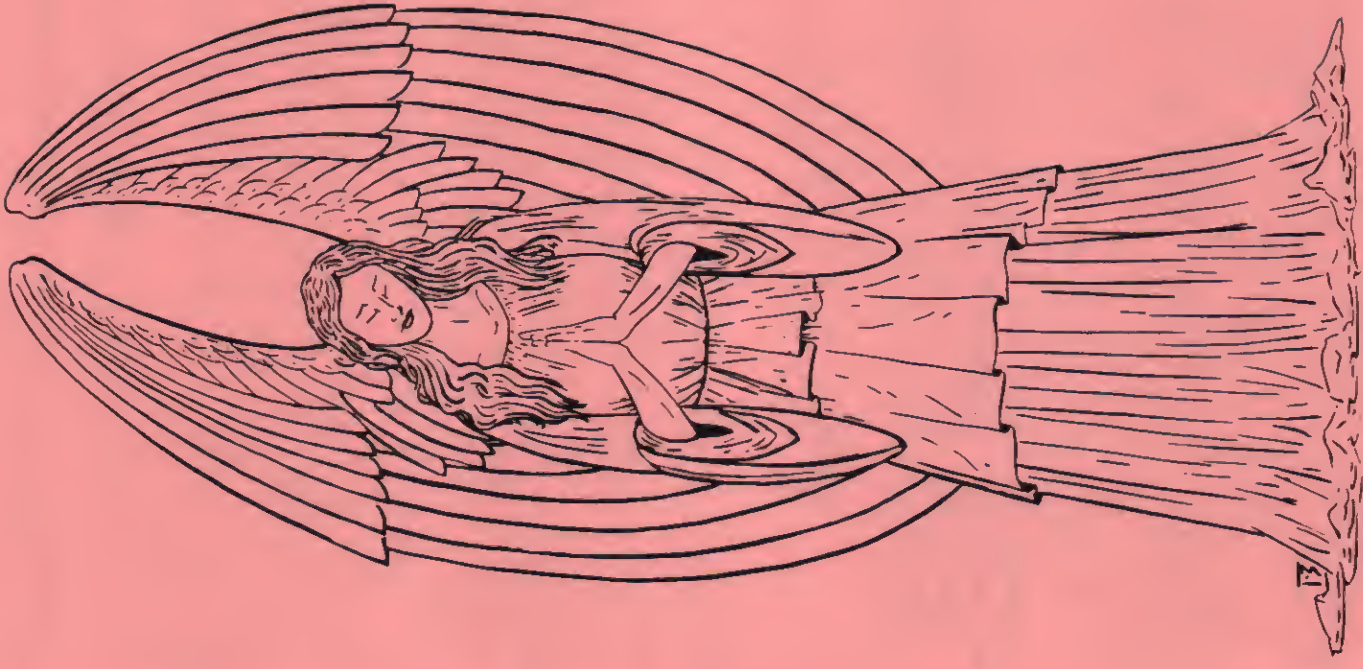
--Robert Johnson, Me and the Devil Blues

*Well, I ain't goin' down that dark road by myself,
If I don't carry you I'm gonna carry someone else.*

--Sid Hemphill

#1 Protean Idol: TOM WAITS

It happens at the crossroads. The place you go to make a deal with the devil, or bury a suicide. The nameless place where the gibbous moon lingers, just above the horizon, sourly illuminating four cracked and empty streets. Approaching, you track graveyard dust with each step of your crepe-soled shoes, leaving faint prints that fade into the endless shuffle of forgotten travelers. You wait for the swinging traffic light to change, perhaps, or just stop to look for the missing street sign for a moment. In that brief stillness, when fate coughs its liquor-breath against your collar and the past pinches your toes with cold, you may hear it. When you pause beneath the urine-yellow light of a cracked street lamp and a monkey-shit brown car slowly chuffs past, you may catch the distant lilt of a squeeze box, the brief laughter of dead men and abandoned women: just for an instant, as if a door had opened in an unseen alley to let someone stumble in, and then closed. Abruptly, the weak sound is gone and you wonder if you heard it at all. At the crossroads you pause, swaying on the curb, your toes hanging in the gutter as you lean forward, trying to catch the music again. You are on the cusp. A door is about to open, somewhere, on rusty hinges. Someone you haven't met yet is smiling like a half-open knife, divining the future in the thick-bottomed glare of a shot glass. You stand on the corner, your eyes flitting



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feeling the strangest things, loving the alien.

--David Bowie

Make no bones about it, childhood is a horror. Sheer, soul-splitting horror. Come now, you don't have to pretend with me. Peel back the calming mask of your adulthood and remember. Remember it like it was, not as you want it to be. Stop smearing the past with the faintly medicinal goo of nostalgia and cultural expectations. Flip up your eyelids, breathe in through your mouth and recall it, just as it was. The stink and terror of childhood. God! Every day was a separate lifetime. Every hour a hazard. Life was just larger, more raw and visceral, then. Each moment affirmed and destroyed my existence. I birthed and buried a million little jewels growing up. Who was I? What did I feel? I felt everything. all the time. each game, every invention, every encounter gripped me, threw me, slapped me up against the bars. Childhood is a feral pit of raw need. Let's not fool ourselves. I think you know what I'm talking about.

#1 Childhood idol: **spock**

And, before you dismiss the truths I'm carefully skinning off the bone for you, let me state that I'm not showing you the bloody muscle of childhood because I was unspeakably abused: no, that's not it at all. My petunia-days of little girlhood were remarkably grand and wondrous. I woke up fine as frog hair and ready for adventure most every day. I was well and truly loved. But I'm not lying, or spinning a tale, when I tell you that there is a dark and savage side to extreme youth: something not even the hormone-crazed, angst-soaked cots of adolescence can compare with. If you remember it honestly, you'll know what I mean. If you can stand to look back.

My childhood perceptions were heightened by the fact that I didn't have a lot of boundaries between my self and others, nor was I able to categorize experience on a "normal" scale: everything was high and potent drama to me. Every fight, every secret, every joyful handclasp was

already bought. The ultimate in self-idolatry: the worship of the worship of the self.

This was before Nike took the genre to new heights. Their commercials did not care for the shoe the company supposedly sold, stitched together in evil, Indonesian economic slave-camps. They concentrated on the mighty leap, the glistening muscle, the sweat soaked athlete-as-god. The sale of the shoe seemed secondary to the selling of a new idea-space whose entrance may be petitioned through the humble laces, leather and vinyl that comprised the physical material to be strapped on the foot, but whose true purpose was to lose yourself completely in the satisfied contemplation of the beautiful self. The ego without exterior reference--the glorious I.

Now, it seems there is a new, post-modern twist to this trend, the commercial in search of a product. Surely you've seen them, been seduced by them. Featuring cunning scenes meant to convey feelings and attitudes, funny little stories, parables that lack any exterior reference, much less a point or moral. The funny Italian grandma, crying great sub-titled tears for her grandson who's going away (those Italians--such a funny, little people!). This scene could be selling anything--how perfect that it's in a language that few North Americans (the commercial's primary market) use. How many Italian companies are worried about their e-commerce solutions these days? It could be selling life insurance, cars, clothes. It really doesn't matter does it?

My theory is that ad agencies produce these little vignettes far before they actually have a campaign to work with, or even a product. Then after producing these short takes, they shop them around. You can just see the scene in the board room ("I love the little Italian grandma! Reminds me of my grandma! I'll take it!").

Other than a distinct talent for creating dissertation titles, Graduate School has also left me with a deep cynicism, an over-large vocabulary, and a distinct love-hate relationship with that which we study. While hating these content-less shells of manipulative media pudding, I have to admit an abiding fascination for them. The next time you see a commercial that you don't recognize, play this game along with me. Glance at the watch--time yourself--how long does it take before you can name the product, the brand? The longer it takes, the more narcissistic and self-idolizing the commercial.

If I had a degree in Sociology or Media Studies rather than Library and Information Science, I'd probably write a dissertation on it.

the media medals:

Idolatry, Narcissism, and the Lack of Content in Broadcast Advertising

++ by David Micko ++

Can you tell I went to graduate school? I learned the art and artifice of crafting semi-colon delimited titles early and practiced it often. I got so good I believe I actually earned grades from the diligent employment of the crafty literate pun, followed by dense, adjective-filled academese. Ahhh, the days of wine and roses! Actually, it was about that time that I began noticing that advertising had less and less substance, and more and more style.

This was the season of the ubiquitous, name-brand jeans commercial. Some pre-pubescent hotty would stuff her anorexic legs into a pair of jeans and strut into a phone booth, making a call to an unknowable second party. That was it, only a discrete flash of the intertwined, stitched logo riding the hump of her ass into the phone booth to serve as a reminder of who was trying to push what. A commercial, yes, but one devoid of content. I was stunned and amazed. OK, it was probably more of an excuse to escape from the rigors of the minutia of the Dewey Decimal system than a profound and meaningful sociological insight

But hey! This was graduate school! Wasn't this exactly what I was being trained for?

As I brought this topic up to friends and family, they indicated a long history of media without content, advertising based on style rather than on the trumpeting of merit. Going all the way back to the 1930's, when American mass media was invented, hucksters have been getting people to buy things based on an imagined opportunity to be cool, to wear the in styles, to soar above the madding crowd. But, I had never seen it to this degree, this utter lack of even mentioning the sponsor, the advertiser, or the huckster behind the curtain.

Now, it could be, that this was simply the first time that I had the opportunity to become dis-intermediated from the media to the degree that I could become aware of its puerile, navel-gazing, self-referencing nature. Perhaps I was so wrapped in the media's lascivious grasp that, up until that point, I was not aware that these ads had no intrinsic content, no sell except to those who had

a sheer, passionate thrill. There was no mediation for me. I lived a storybook life, complete with vast triumphs and humbling defeats. I was the victim of, and participated in, great evils, as well as stunning acts of kindness. It was amazing: the beginnings of conscious, thunderous, tumultuous life.

While I think this sort of unmediated experience of life at the early stages of development has given me some very special gifts and perceptions, it wasn't always peaches and cream. Boundaries and limits are useful from time to time. A scale by which to judge one's experiences comes in handy at the end of the day. Fighting evil and cosmic forces of indifference and appetite day after quick day is exhausting. In other words, sometimes, I needed to shut the emotional door to my burgeoning self. And the hell if I knew how to do it back then. I would go to my room and crouch, rocking, staring into my own eyes from the corner of my bureau mirror. I was desperately trying to reinforce me amidst the huge, rushing roar of the world.

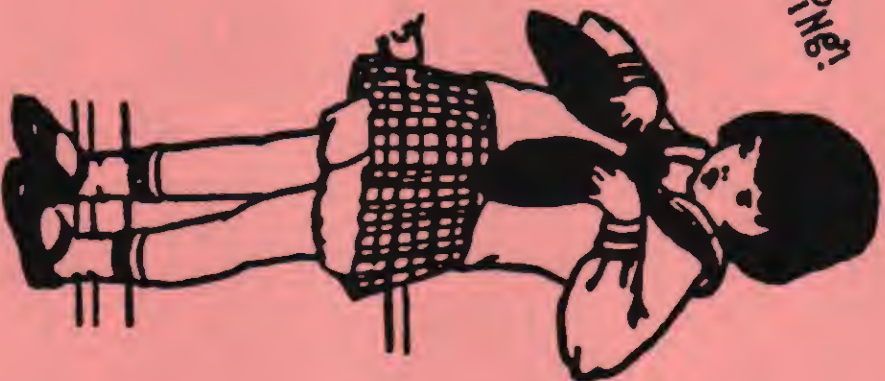
This is where Spock came in. Bless this little god, who came to me in the form of a Star Trek character, who visited me in my extremity! He was my invisible friend, always at my side (he even had an invisible desk next to me at school). When I imagined bullies as hyenas circling the classroom, waiting to pick off the weak, Spock gave me a scientific, reasoned way to approach my anxiety.

"Observe the pack-like activities of these earthlings," Spock would say, leaning over to me. "It would appear that they will attack if they sense fear from their potential prey. The only logical way to prevent their assault is to resist the impulse to panic." I would solemnly and imperceptibly nod to my invisible space bud. "Indeed Mister Spock," I might even whisper out of the corner of my mouth, "You are correct in your analysis." And of course, Spock's advice steered me clear through countless childhood perils and snares. What I needed was balance, logic, reason: A scale by which to measure and judge my experiences. A way to consider and plan my actions. Spock, my first mentor and imaginary friend, gave me that.

Some days, I would do well to remember his advice. Would it be so bad, crouched and huddled in a modern mauve and grey conference room, murmuring with my

corporate pack-mates over the dull glow of a Power Point presentation, to peel back my eyelids and breathe from my mouth--to recall the thrumming terror of childhood? To superimpose that ancient, youthful fright on a contemporary situation of dread in my bowels and, at the culminating moment of terror and despair, conjure the logical god, my emotionless idol Spock, to guide me, to save me, to show me the way again. Indeed, I believe my analysis is correct. If he could see me again, now, amidst the wilds of steel and glass and computers devoid of Majel Barrett's voice, I know what he would say. Just what he always said. With one brow arched, untouched by the chaos: "Fascinating."

ASCINATION!



jewelzebub wants to bellow, "Go fuck yourself you pathetic, dickless prick!" You're just jealous!"

calamity jewelz wants to snidely quote Scripture, "Remove the plank from thine own eye, before you remove the speck in your neighbor's."

But it's jewel that speaks from my lips: "Of course he has faults. Of course he has made mistakes and continues to make mistakes. His perfection lies in his flaws; his divinity is manifest in his mortality. I prefer my idols with blemishes; my angels are most beloved when fallen. The pedestal must be cracked for it to have any value at all. It is because of his errors that I adore him! His limits make him infinitely precious! His blindness makes him shine like the sun! I admire him, warts and all. I love his foibles, his wickedness, yes, even the unknown darkness of his heart, as much as his talent, his will, and his power of flight."

And if unconditional love and the manifestation of dreams is not a divine message, I ask you, what is?



I wax poetic, but what else can I do when confronted with a miracle? A human being who has bent the laws of physics, the rules of time and space to his will? A man who has revealed that we can have our dreams in this life, no need to wait for the next. He has shown us that we can direct our desire and talents to fashion our own wings. We can rise from the ash over and over. The power is within us. The divine spark is in every heart; holy power in every physical form.

I can sense the restlessness, the unwillingness to accept an American basketball player as a messenger of the divine. The surliness is nearly tangible. I can hear it, I know what they are all saying...

The devil, dressed nattily as an old professor of mine hisses: "jewelzzzzzz, how can you love a basketball player? Why, he's an icon for the capitalist machine! He's a commercial creation! He represents an oppressive, patriarchal, destructive system of sports culture! He's no role model, my dear, except for those ignorant enough to be duped by the marketing hacks who created him. He's fool's gold! A trick for the weak-minded! Only drooling cattle follow his media-constructed exploits. How can a basketball player be important? How can you care about a sports figure when men and women are doing truly important work all over the world? He's a seductive joke played upon the masses by the powers that be. He's a placebo created to keep you stuck in your easy chair, mindlessly watching television instead of protesting in the streets, agitating for reform and fomenting revolution!" "But Satan," I say simply, opening my hands: "He can fly."

Then the legion behind the Devil starts to mutter and growl. "What about his gambling?" one clean-cut bespectacled daemon shouts.

"And his willingness to promote a product made in slave-labor camps in Indonesia?" a young succubus indignantly adds.

"What about... What about... What about..." the rest chime in, listing Michael's failures, mistakes, flaws and errors.

My imps and angels cluster about me, as I smile in the face of this justifiable anger. I feel my tri-pronged personality rouse itself.

I believe in nothing
everything is sacred.



I believe in everything
nothing is sacred.

Tom Robbins, Even Cowgirls Get the Blues

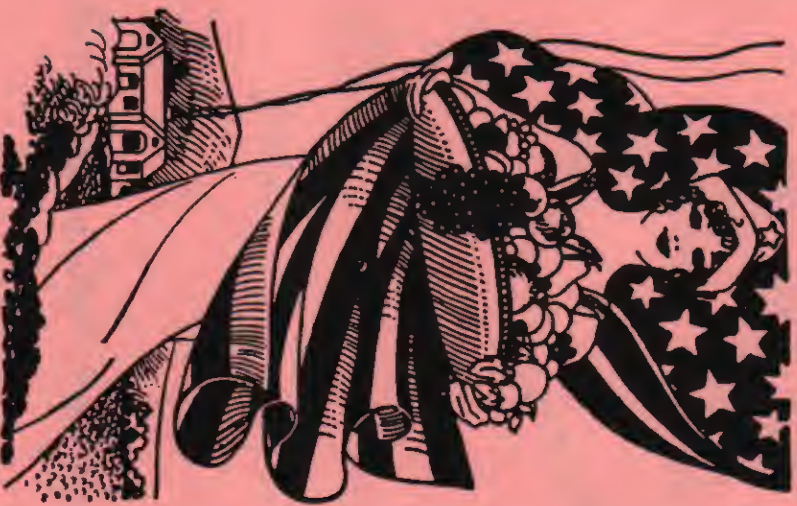
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No bird soars too high when he soars with his own wings.

--William Blake, from The Proverbs of Hell

like Zeus in America | by Dancing Bear

yes he has unzipped his fly again dangling
his godhood over lipsticked blue nymphs another
ingenue de jour and yes he peels women like grapes
slowly sucking the flesh in a hallway in an alcove
an outer office of Olympus he strokes her hair
touches her breasts smiles a thought for Freud's cigar
and thinks someone will give him a star maybe a constellation
or a planet for it because he is immortal then written or
talked about long after his term of office is over



How can you not love a man who flies? I suppose it's possible. There must be some twisted, bitter souls who would spit upon a modern Icarus whose spirit allowed him to cheat the sun. But not me. I've always dreamt of flying. After I shuffle off this mortal coil, I imagine the pair that must be waiting for me: black, red and a deep, vibrant indigo. A long sweep of feathers will brush the ground when I walk, and they will be strong and light enough to bear me up when I close my eyes and exhale. In dreams I have flown without wings: it's like swimming in the air. But I didn't think flight was possible for mortals in this life. But that was before Michael. Is it a coincidence that he shares an archangel's name?

#1 Flying idol: MICHAEL JORDAN

I don't believe in coincidence: I believe in miracles. I believe a man can fly if he sets his mind to it. I have seen and I believe! His beauty is breathtaking. The gleam of his smooth skull, the sweep of his rosy arms; the stretch and coiled power of his legs, the stiff directive of his fingers. When I watch him play, I can see how his will takes his body to impossible heights: it's like an electromagnetic pulse, a current of potent desire streaming from his dark, burning eyes and flowing effortlessly through his limbs. I have seen him leap and become airborne; I have seen him slow time and hang, like a hawk, about to drop and strike. I have seen him dodge and whirl with more grace than an entire ballet troupe. I haven't put my finger in his side, but I have borne witness to his magnificent flight, the streams of glory trailing from him as he descends, like a comet falling from the heavens. And the best, the very best is this: that precious, pink mortal tongue wagging out of his mouth through it all. The one part of him over which he has no iron control.

Striped tie stranglers and
mass-murdered drudges
outside Capitol Hill in the springtime,
pressing close up against the
White House fence.

Faces glow macabre in the spotlights
[O closer, O closer]
placed around the Rose Garden
and the Federal style columns.

[Let me in]
They smell something that apple blossoms
haven't covered up in years. Power starts the streets.

"They want absolute control over their divisions,"
says my father-in-law
explaining why DC traffic is so bad,
"and they want to be as close to the seat of power as possible."

[Let me in]
Hush, good people.

Because the word "money" is never spoken
out loud, they must face backwards and
speak in convolutions.

[Bull and Bear, Bull and Bear]
Wall Street in excelsis.

Power there, corruption here -- they fly
to Las Vegas and quibble over
the craps table,
the prostitutes,
the highest penthouse.

[The more the better]
O Las Vegas!
May your neon lights shine
perpetually, lighting the exits
and the entrances to the places
of power and corruption,
the modern-day devices,
the modern-day devices.

[Let me in]
Fawn upon the gates!
Strangle in the sheets.

my life without christie brinkley | by Marek Lugowski

it starts half past seven, my life.
i detest so obscenely early goodmornings
made doubly miserable
that there's no christie brinkley to say hi to.
i would not begrudge her the bathroom
for an hour -- provided she let me in first.
as it is there's not too much contention
without her around.

when i make my breakfast, and often i do not,
i don't hear marek, would you fix me some coffee,
i'm running late and the limo will be here any
second. so i skip the coffee.

when i take my shower i don't have to
take her hair out of the drain, saves me time.
and when i dry my hair i don't trip over her
cosmetics. if i did, she might get sore.

when i'm at work christie never calls
to say wanna do indian for lunch?
when i get home, there's hardly any mail for her
except for "or current resident."

you know, i could get her on some sharp catalog mailing lists.
i think she might like that. always so busy.
too busy to shop. too busy to stop by.
too busy to be around
much.



You have set up in New York Harbor a monstrous idol which you call Liberty. The only thing that remains to complete the monument is to put on its pedestal the inscription written by Dante on the gate of Hell: *All hope abandon, ye who enter here.*

--George Bernard Shaw

thought of her. A woman who would masturbate onstage. A woman who wasn't afraid to dress like a flirty, cute bubblegum girl one moment and an S&M, whip-bearing priestess the next.

She taught me that, as a woman, you don't have to be one thing. You don't have to be one-dimensional. You can be as contradictory and multi-faceted and strange and crazy and daring and bold and fragile and bitchy as you want. You don't have to play the part. You don't have to say no. You don't have to say yes. You can enjoy, desire, and actively pursue sexual pleasure, like a man does, without any emotional or social repercussions. And if there are any repercussions (if people talk about you behind your back, if they call you a whore), you just don't care, because you are **THAT STRONG** and you are **THAT POWERFUL** and you know what you want & what you need & who you are **THAT MUCH**. You can put your own needs first. You don't have to answer to anyone. You can say absolutely no regrets and mean it. You don't have to be small. You don't have to get fucked—you can do the fucking, too. You don't have to aim to please. You don't have to apologize for your sexuality your body your beauty your intelligence your desire your ambition your goals your mistakes.

She taught me that there are people out there brave enough to do it alone, and do it no matter what society tells them, no matter what parents tell them, no matter what their boyfriends tell them, because all that really matters is what you want to do, and having the guts to do it. She taught me that you don't have to accept the boxes they want to put you in—that you can fuck with gender roles and sex roles and the ideas of masculinity femininity. You don't have to be what they want-tell-need you to be. You don't have to be easy for them to understand, or to like. You don't have to play dumb.

Oh Madonna, I love you still. Because of your existence, I think I've been a feminist since I was seven years old.

I love you in your *Indian garb spiritual quest motherhood* days as much as I loved you in your *fluorescent yellow ankle socks with black stiletto heels* days. It doesn't matter what you wear, or how your appearance changes, you'll always represent the same things to me: brains, sex, personal empowerment, and fucking society's norms.

Love, Laura

[This piece also appeared in Laura's exceptional zine, *the air i breathe*. To get a copy, send \$1.00 & a stamp, or a trade, to Laura Barcella, 33 Grant Avenue, Second Floor, Northampton MA 01060.]

Everything I ever needed to know, I learned from Madonna

by laura barcella

Madonna is my idol. She has been my idol since the moment we were introduced. We have never been formally introduced, of course. I mean, the moment I first heard the opening strains of "Borderline" echoing from my dad's car radio, as I sat quietly in the backseat, seven year old girl-flesh pressing against sticky leather interior, staring out the window. From that moment on, I loved her with a devotion so fierce and clenching, I haven't encountered anything like it since. I came up with these elaborate fantasy visions of what she looked like whilst singing "Borderline" (this was before I had seen a photo or the video, probably before I was introduced to MTV). I pictured her with long, straight, glossy dark brown hair. It was quite a surprise when I learned what she really looked like.

I was the only third grader at my tiny DC elementary school to dress like Madonna on a regular basis and actually show up for school that way. I would appear for math class in black lace cutoff gloves and a black fishnet tank top (with another tank underneath, of course— my mother, in vain, attempted to protect my modesty...at least a little). I wore a black lace rag in my hair. I had a fluorescent pink sweatshirt that had the instruction "RELAX" (remember that song?) printed in huge block letters. The sweatshirt is unrelated to Madonna, but it's amusing anyhow. I bore no shame. My third grade style, my third grade wannabe persona, was all hers.

As I grew older, my obsession faded, but only to the extent that I stopped proclaiming my idolatry through my choice of physical adornment. I still listened to her--and loved her--like a fanatic; I just hid it a little better. She was, to me, the embodiment of reckless, carefree, sexy, defiant, rebellious cool. I argued with my father that she was the most beautiful woman in the world (he, like a good father, told me that I was). I was still very young, too young to realize why her image struck me so, why I admired her brashness and fearlessness to the extent of obsession.

I grew up with Madonna. I have watched her evolve a thousand times. She never has the same hair color, but she always represents the same thing to me. In this way, she has always remained the same. She was the first indication I ever received that women are allowed to be sexual and not be ashamed of it. She introduced me to the world of sex—specifically, being a woman in the world of sex, not as an object, not as a passive, giggling plaything, but as a powerhouse. As a strong, brave, defiant woman. A woman who didn't give a fuck what everybody

Undelivered | by Mark Senkus

the dream has been
defeated with its
broken teeth
hardly giving off
a sour burp over
the loss

and we know it
yet no one quite
wakes up to it
even the children
sleep within their
dismissed ideas of
heroes

money has taken over
and while the gods
of the skyscrapers
sit in their snake dens on
the twentieth floor
getting richer
the meek inherit the
asphalt from a ten story drop
I can hear the wind
pounding their eardrums
as they go down...
maybe they wake
just
before they hit
I'll never be able
to tell

I make the rounds over
the bloodied sidewalks
only finding more
dull tricks
and the dulled eyes
of both the tricksters
and the prey
all like stoned clowns
dressed so convincingly in
their seriousness
slipping on banana peels
with no one caring enough
to laugh

drugged by an obviousness as
clear as a nightmare
we can't even remember
the effort of our leftover
dreams as they dim away
from function

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You cannot dismantle the Master's house using the Master's tools.
--Audre Lorde

I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's.
--William Blake

Looking back, I wonder if the paper had anything to do with it. The fine, delicate onion-skin of those ancient hard cover books bound thirty or more years ago. Maybe the binding contributed as well. It was a rich burgundy color, sturdy but not too stiff. A lot of hands had handled the English Romantic Writers anthology before I picked it up out of the "Used Books" bin for 25 bucks one Spring. How tempting it is to look back and try to attribute physical and environmental factors--the paper, the binding, the cold April air--and imagine that it had something to do with the fact that the contents of the book blew the back of my f*cking head off.

I gotta give credit where it's due. It was William Blake that blasted a hole through my cranium and let the black, velvet universe into my brainpan. It was nothing but his words that took me there. His writings, and later, his vibrant, undulating artwork. Even back then, when the dark, rushing torrent of the subversive divine cracked my skull, the full realization of who Blake was and what he did didn't sink in till later. In fact, the fecund, black flower that damned poet planted in my much-mind is still unfolding, petal by dusky petal.

#1 Zinester Idol: **BLAKE**

The man was mad, or so they say. As a boy he saw visions. Angels filling trees, their flashing wings shining and burning from every branch. When he was four years old he said God peeked at him through a window and made him scream! Good Blake senior threatened to knock the boy into next week when he heard of the "visions." The poor kid was cursed with more honesty than I was. I knew enough to shut my trap when God showed his face to me. But maybe little girls learn more quickly.

If desired, make a special request or petition to Mary at this time. Speak your need aloud, or visualize it. If you have no particular request to make, continue to meditate on Mary at her most beautiful and vibrant. Feel her song infuse you with strength and grace. Know that her hands will help support you when you stumble. Feel her love wash over you in steady waves. Know that you are not alone. Sense your heart and body filling with energy.

At the close of your devotional, put your hands on the ground and imagine any excess energy leaving your body. Release it from your hands with thanks, and let it flow back into the Earth. Then, continuing to breathe slowly and deeply, draw your grounding roots back up from the Earth and into your body. Feel your center of energy burning brightly and with renewed vigor. Put out the incense and the candle, if they haven't finished burning. Save the Holy Water and salt if you wish, or pour the water out on the Earth and toss the salt into a living body of water (river, lake, etc.). Keep the icon of Mary and the flowers out as a peaceful reminder, if you like.

Closing (say the following, or something similar):
In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; In the Name of the Virgin, the Blessed Mother, and the Wise Crone.

Mother dear, O pray for me,
Whilst far from heav'n and thee
I wander in a fragile bark
O'er life's tempestuous sea.

Till in heaven eternally
Thy love and bliss I share.

O Virgin Mother, from thy throne,
So bright in bliss above,
Protect thy child, and cheer my path
With thy sweet smile of love.

Mother dear, O pray for me,
Should pleasure's siren lay
E'er tempt thy child to wander far
From virtue's path away.

Mother dear, remember me,
And never cease thy care.

When thorns beset life's devious way,
And darkling waters flow,
Then, Mary, aid thy weeping child,
Thyself a Mother show.

--"Mother Dear, O Pray for Me" from a Treasury of Prayers to the Blessed Mother in the
Saint Joseph Daily Missal, 1956.

muscle. She is luminous. Her feet are planted in earth and flowers have sprouted between her toes. Her smile is a blinding flash: she is looking directly at you.

If so moved, meditate on one of the Five Joyful Mysteries of Mary: Humility, Charity, Poverty, Obedience, Piety. Say something aloud, if you wish, or simply continue to focus on Mary as Mother. Imagine her embracing you. Feel her love envelope you. Imagine a sense of peace and security flowing from her and into your spirit. Know that you are well-loved and blessed with joy and abundance.

† Dip your hand in the Holy Water and anoint yourself. If you have fresh flowers, take a few of the petals and drop them into the bowl. Watch them float on the surface of the water. Imagine Mary in her sorrowful incarnation. She is older, and her mother Ann stands behind her. The two women support each other. Their faces are calm, but tears glint in their eyes. One tear falls from Mary's eye, and turns into a bright star, illuminating the heavens. All the knowledge of the world is in Mary's eyes. She knows all and bears the burden on her broad shoulders. Ann caresses Mary's face and kisses her hair. Their faces softly shine and their tears fall and sprinkle the night sky with light.

If you wish, meditate on one of the Five Sorrowful Mysteries of Mary: Contrition, Purity, Courage, Patience, Self-Denial. Speak aloud, if you are inspired, or continue to meditate on Mary and her mother. Feel the calm that follows their tears. Imagine Mary and Ann draping the night sky around you like a warm blanket. Feel their love and knowledge surround you, support you. Feel your soul grow still and tranquil, like the surface of the water.

† Take the dish of salt and place some on your tongue. Imagine Mary at the height of her power and glory. See her in the incarnation that speaks you to most at this time, or visualize her as Dante did: at the center of a huge rose, with all the petals moving and whirling around her. On each petal is an angel, or a soul, singing her praise. She is the Queen of Heaven, a bright morning star. She is at the heart of the universe, the seat of all wisdom and mystery. Her golden crown is marked with the sun and the moon; her bare feet are supported by silvery clouds. Both of her hands are open and she is singing the song of creation.

Blake went on to become a gifted engraver and artist who earned his sorry keep by doing commissioned copies of the clichéd and hackneyed work of inferior artists. At one of his lowest points he was drawing bowls and saucers for an early version of the Wedgwood catalogue.

Nevertheless, boys and girls, despite this mad artist's soul-crushing day job, he still did his own work. Yes, after a long day's labor pimping his skills to put bread on the table, he still had the energy and insane desire to write his own poems and do his own artwork. Sounds like a zinester to me, children!

I like to think of Blake as an original zinester. In fact, I have fetishized and sanctified him as the Prime Self-Made Mover, the Ur-Crackpot, the father of Zinesters. The man made his own stuff: wrote it, painted it, and printed & bound it in many cases. He never made a penny (erm, or tuppence, I should say). Probably lost money, if you know what I mean. Still, the old fool persisted. Why? Because he saw visions! Because he had something to say! Because he believed that the power of imagination and creation, even in a decayed, immoral society, were still worth crowing about! I have to say it again--can I get a witness? Sounds like a zinester to me.

At one point he finally nabbed a cash cow: a friend of his hooked him up with a potential patron named William Hayley. Blake and his wife eagerly quit London and headed out to the country. I'm sure he was thinking, "This is it! Patron-city! I can do my art, my true art and get paid for it! HOT DAMN!" (well, maybe not those exact words). Unfortunately, old Hayley was a nice enough guy, but... he just didn't quite "get" Blake. All that fire, those visions, that thunderous collection of divine and devilish--it didn't wash with Hayley, who kept getting Blake gigs painting ladies' fans and miniature portraits. Good God--the man who saw angels in trees reduced to painting landscapes on fans. It was enough to drive him perilously close to the edge of mundane sanity or true madness. So, despite the steady cash flow and potential to cultivate a secure livelihood, Blake parted ways with his patron and headed back to the stink and squalor of the city. In a letter he wrote,

If you, who are organized by Divine Providence for Spiritual communion, Refuse & bury your Talent in the Earth, even tho' you should want Natural Bread, Sorrow

*& Desperation pursues you thro' life, & after death
shame & confusion of face to eternity... You will be
call'd the base Judas who betray'd his Friend!*

In other words: be true to your gifts even if you end up poor and crazy. He tried to do a few private shows of his work, but The Examiner vilified him, saying he was a lunatic whose work was "far-fetched, absurd, and libidinous." But still, he kept on. No market, no money, no patron: critics thought he was off his nut. Still, he kept writing and painting. If Blake wasn't a prototypical zinester, I'll eat my K*enko's Copy Card.

But here's the tremendous bonus with Blake: he was as subversive as all get out. His work really tweaks the wingnuts and loosens the hinges on the conscious mind. One of my favorite pieces is The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, a satirical piece attacking fatuous religious prophets (in particular, Emanuel Swedenborg) and the stifling forces of religion and law that restrain creative energy, passion and genius. In it, Blake reverses the paradigm of the divine and wicked, portraying angels as stuffy, arrogant pendants who limit and confine human energy, whereas devils are inspirational and creative powers. Can you see why the imps and I dig Blake? Do you understand how the madman is my true, spiritual zine father? No doubt, my friends, no doubt. Someone once "ask 'sk'd" me over my impish column, upset that it was called "Satan Sez." I could only smile my Cheshire smile and mumble, "Read Blake... read Blake."

All my zining, my small press madness, my books, my broadsides, my comix and propaganda--all of it rolls back around to Blake. Maybe there really was something to the paper. Maybe there's some hidden key in the binding of that book I salvaged from the bargain bin and my current slavish devotion to handmade publications. Maybe there are hallucinogenic spores and fungi breeding in the ancient pages of my 19th century poetry volumes. Maybe... ah, nah. That's a lie. It's Blake, pure and simple. His words. His beautiful, glorious madness. His message of subversive idealism, growing stronger and taking root, mysteriously blooming and renewing itself in my mind, my imagination. It's Blake who made the miraculous hole in my head. The Trephinator! The Ur-Zinester! Father!

statuette, rosary, etc.) are optional, and are placed in the center of your altar.

Sit in a comfortable position (use a pillow or blanket if you wish). Take a few moments to quiet yourself. Breathe slowly and deeply. Let yourself relax. Set aside your worries for the time being. If you have a grounding and centering ritual, use it now. If not, continue to breathe deeply and slowly for a few minutes. Imagine your energy as a small burning sphere, or seed near your navel or solar plexus. Focus on your energy. Feel the positive force of your own spirit. Then imagine tendrils sprouting from the burning sphere or seed of energy and burrowing themselves into the Earth. Imagine yourself firmly rooted and grounded. Feel the energy traveling along the tendrils. You are giving energy to, and drawing power from, the Earth. Continue to breathe deeply. When you are calm, centered and relaxed, being the devotional.

Invocation (say the following, or something similar):
In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
In the Name of the Virgin, the Blessed Mother, and the Wise Crone.

Light the incense (rose is good, but use what pleases you). Visualize Mary as the Virgin. Her face is young and peaceful. Light and energy shimmer from her blue and white robes. She wears a crown of stars and the crescent moon is on her forehead. Her hands are open, her arms extended. A serpent is coiled at her feet. She embodies beauty and shines with wonder.

If you like, meditate on one of the five Glorious Mysteries of Mary: Faith, Hope, Love, Eternal Happiness, or Devotion. Say a few words, if you are inspired, or simply meditate on the Virgin Mary in her glory. Feel her infusing you with energy and lifting your spirit. Feel your heart grow light and your spirit become more buoyant.

Light the white candle. Visualize Mary as a Mother. Perhaps she is pregnant, cradling her belly with both hands. Or she might be holding her infant son, smiling and laughing. Her eyes are clear and her shining hair forms rays around her face, which is radiating happiness and joy. Her hands are strong; her bare arms, well-

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I live my Advent in the womb of Mary. And on one night when a great star swings free from its high mooring and walks down the sky to be the dot above the Christus i, I shall be born of her by blessed grace. I wait in Mary-darkness, faith's walled place, with hope's expectancy of nativity.

I knew for long she carried me and fed me, guarded me and loved me, though I could not see. But only now, with inward jubilee, I come upon the earth's most amazing knowledge: someone is hidden in this dark with me.

--Jessica Powers, Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers, 1948

Naked I came from my mother's womb, Naked I shall return.

--the Book of Job, 1:2

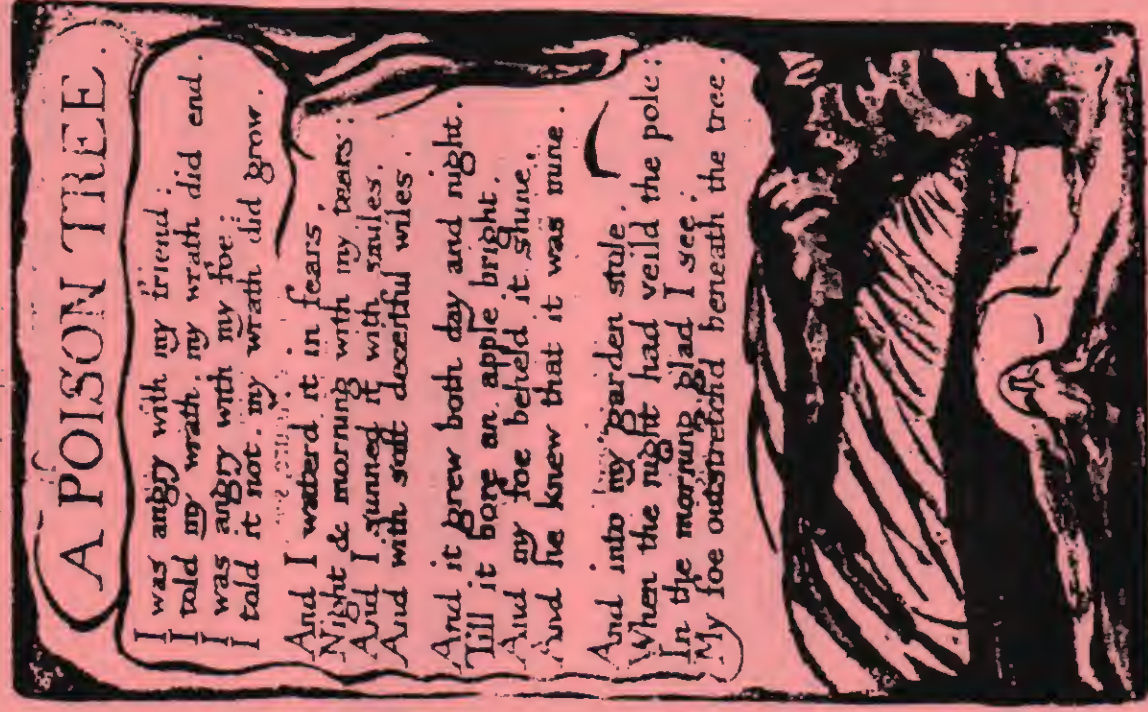
#1 Holy Idol: Blessed Virgin Mary

What follows is a devotional to the Virgin Mary by calamity jewelz. Use it as written, or adapt to suit your own needs.

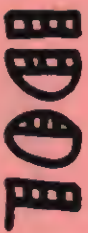
What you will need: incense, a white candle, a small bowl of Holy Water (self-blessed or from a Church), and a small dish of sea salt. Fresh flowers and an icon of Mary are optional. Note: the devotional can be done without any of these accouterments. They are a pleasant addition and can help focus your energy, but are not required.

Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed: your room, a secluded spot outdoors, etc. Turn off the ringer on the phone, lock the door, and take what precautions you can to insure you will be left in peace

Arrange the following items in front of you on a small table, flat rock, or other stable surface: To the East: incense & incense burner (stick, cone, or whatever you prefer); to the South: a white candle; to the West: a small bowl of Holy Water; to the North: a small dish of sea salt. Fresh flowers (choose what pleases you, but white and/or pink flowers are ideal) and your icon of Mary (a picture,



William Blake, "The Poison Tree" from Songs of Experience



| by Steve Boland

A word on a piece of paper.

A scene from a movie.

A Golden Calf. Why is that a bad thing?

A small thing.

A cheap wooden carving – plastic ruby eyes – sold at an air-conditioned gift shop in the heart of a painted desert. The eyes dislodge into nothingness within a week of purchase leaving small, translucent dots of Elmer's Glue to stare blankly into whatever junk-drawer is now its home.

A big thing.

Perhaps a concept too big to absorb. Fortune. Billions of dollars. An image to worship knowing it can't really be obtained. One buys a lottery ticket as an offering to the ideal. The offering creates hope that the Great God of Money will bless you. Not this time. The humbled believer takes momentary solace in the knowledge that another dollar will now aid Our Natural and Economic Environments. Then the supplicant goes out to invest another eight-bits in the dream of eighty million.

A beautiful thing.

The part of your wife's hip where the leg and the torso join in a perfect curve. A luscious, deliberate, warm, smooth and gracious curve. A curve that betrays all that is artificial and ethereal. A triumph of flesh over all that is uncertain.

A-Side

You lie so still, so silent, breathless; waiting for the curse that is the benediction. You want me to speak. What shall I say to you, love?

The blood races through your veins, every nerve painfully attenuated. Thus suspended, you wait, alive with fear of the utterance that will enslave you. The air is perfumed with the incense of your dread.

Lay yourself open, that I might make a feast of you. Those small offerings you made, the veiled admissions doled out in tiny drops upon my tongue, were not enough. Intoxicated and hungry, I demand more. Requital is a condition of worship. The payment, if not made willingly, will be exacted.

I know how much it hurts you; but this is the pain you long to embrace. Your willingness to sacrifice touches me. Give yourself over: I know what you want to hear.

Listen.

I allow you to amuse yourself with denying me the gratification I so crave only because I love to be tormented. Everything I have said and done was designed to bring you to this state. I am selfish to the core; even your pleasure has to serve me.

I baptize you with words of fire and pour my passion into the smouldering wounds. Not an inch of you remains unscathed. Your agony exalts me. You are a treasure; I want what you have, and I will take it from you. You have given me the means to do it.

My fingers trace a path along your heated skin. The venom passes from my mouth into yours; the taste of retribution. Tell me how it feels as it seeps into your blood and rapes your defenseless soul. Only then will your faith be rewarded: the effortless consummation of the match made in hell.

It's a beautiful thing, love, is it not?

B-Side

i will do it, yes, just ask me, You don't have to beg.
Say the words that bring me into servitude, where Self is
governed by Your delicate fingers.

Hold that dripping candle over me and write words on
my virginal flesh with searing bee's wax. The painful
intimacy that cuts through my restraint, turns my eyes back
into in my head - psychic voyeurism. i promise to be silent
and endure the intense passion that interrupts my breathing
and forbids my mind purchase in reality. i revel in idolatry,
seeking Your perfection everywhere i turn.

Stop. A street sign reminds me that i exist because of
You.

"Yes, love, whatever You say. i will do it gladly." My
dignity is lost in the glory of Your Being.

"Brand me with Greek fire. i am not complete unless
Anguish and pleasure come directly from You! Will You
soothe me with ice after the fire, dearest? Will You dig Your
heel into my throat? Will You steal the last tears from my
parched, aching eyes? Feed me poison that i might
hallucinate and see Your twisted visions ever more clearly.
Watch me dance on broken glass. Speak words to me that
make my weak flesh twitch like a marionette. Pull the trigger,
please. i can almost hear the pregnant chamber rotating when
You pull back the hammer. The worn metal, the heat of
thousands of lethal projectiles have smoothed the barrel,
coring it like an apple; core my skull in kind."

"Look at me, my darling. i smile for You. i open my
mouth for the passionless cylinder. Let me caress it as You
violate my orifice. i feel so sordid, but i am sordid for You."

"Please, let this last forever."

I Turned You Into Myth
(Or, How I Continue the Fall Into Language)

by C. C. Russell



And I worshipped you
as Pygmalion,
his hands crushing
stone to carve her,
Pygmalion going down
on her rock
hard skin.

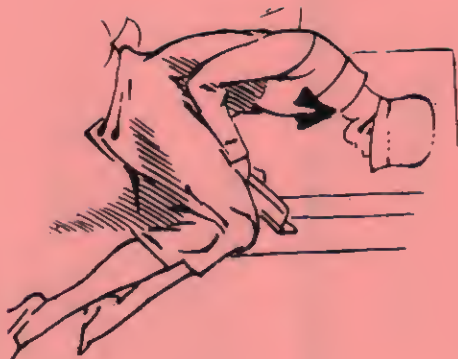
These are the ways in which
we speak
of religion.

Communion.
Supplication.
Idolatry.
Blood.

I used these words
to describe you
and I,
I within
you.

And still,
you
never came
to life.

(A Letter, Transcribed by DeAnna Knippeling)



Dear John -

I have deposited the puppy with your Aunt Fiona, who says that she understands. The keys to the house are enclosed. Where the ownership of any item in our joint possession is questionable, I concede its use to you.

With your recent actions I cannot abide. Admiration, yes, is one thing; flattery and praise can be sweeter than any revenge. If you had but romanticized me, I shouldn't have minded; your emotion either would have matured or abandoned you. Devotion is, finally, that for which all humanity strives.

Idolization is the hallmark of the zealot or Pharisee, however; its object is dogmatized and turned, like a Galatea reversed, to stone. Worship precludes love, and I shan't remain to be transformed into an object more worthy of your adulation.

If you should fail to discover my forwarding address, please assume events have fallen for the best.

With truly dashed hopes,

Mary

Mississippi River. Legend has it that they hoped Prince would see the tapes floating by his recording studio and rescue them, like Moses in the reeds. Would Prince have seen the cracked half-light of the Replacements and revisioned his own funky groove?

I dig Prince, yeah, even in his Artist-Formerly-Known-As incarnation, but what a heady rush to think of the Replacements' influence! More bands would do well to sample a bit of their honesty, their rawness, and their talent. Yes, you heard me: talent. Some may scoff at their drunken escapades. Some may point out that the boys didn't know shit about making music when they started. But they learned. And, if you listen, really listen, you'll hear the aching truth of their gift. The soft, blurred pain that infuses "Here Comes a Regular," or the gentle, rueful tone of "Achin' To Be," or the jaunty insouciance of "On the Bus." In more than a few places, the guitar, the bass, the drums, and Paul Westerberg's voice pull together in a transcendent all-too-brief burst of genius. Look past the occasional clumsy lyric or misplayed chord... there are spots of glory. Yeah, they were doomed. But it was a helluva ride down. And they left some music behind that is truly alternative. Not the radio-friendly, niche-marketed, alterna-pop schlop--I mean dirty half-wasted scruffy punk honest-to-god alternative music.

Did the 'Mats have regrets? Hell if I know. Probably. But having regrets (and success-tinged regrets, I might add) is better than sitting on your butt and growing old never having done anything at all. I hold their mistakes as dearly as their successes. In fact, it's that potent mixture of impossible accomplishments and stupid-ass fuck-ups that makes their story legendary. Inspirational. If four punk kids from the Twin Cities can make rock-n-roll that shook a few souls down (and, yes, even caused a small tremor in the music industry) then why in the hell can't we? Those bastards and prankster-idols fell down and scraped their knees in front of the world. I could only hope to do half so well. A few pages from their scratchy songbook are still blowing around--catch one if you can. Let your own star rise and fall and piss itself. Take that torn scrap of ambition smeared with spit and beer. Hold it close to your chest and make a promise to give the world as good as you get. The Replacements did.

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*Before you're allowed to do anything real
First you must learn how to fail.*

*We ain't much to look at so / Close your eyes, here we go
Playin' at the talent show / It's too late to turn back, here we go--*

--'Mats, Learn How to Fail

--'Mats, Talent Show

That's what made them great--they were half-saints, half-bastards.

--John Rzeznik, Goo Goo Dolls

#1 D.I.Y. Idols: The Replacements

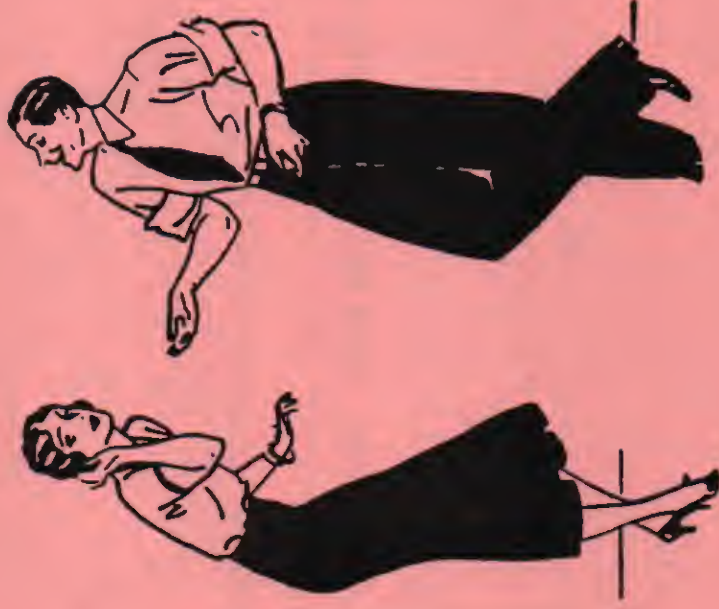
"Beautiful Losers" my sweet butt. Let's take that particular Replacements myth and turn it on its wishful ear, shall we? The 'Mats were Kick-Ass Losers. I mean, please, it's not like they did it halfway. If they lost (and yes, I have to admit, they did), it's because they grabbed defeat by the balls and squeezed--just like they did with their success. Those good Minnesota boys put the same energy into pummeling the local and national music scene as they did into roughly crooning their ballads. Raucous or tender; drunk or painfully, regrettably sober, the Replacements were one of the most passionate, Do-It-Yourself, rock-n'-roll bands ever in the history of this planet.

The seeds of their success and their ultimate self-destruction were planted together at the get-go, and as the band progressed, their minor victories were inextricably intertwined with their embarrassing defeats. Remember January 18, 1986? The band was invited to play on Saturday Night Live,--but they were too drunk to play straight and fucked up big time. None of the SNL cast talked to them after the show. And do you recall that MTV played their song "The Ledge"? But only on the condition that the video would not show anything suicidal (despite the fact that the lyrics are about a boy who jumps off a ledge and kills himself). The 'Mats were so pissed that their "video" for "The Ledge" was four minutes of a stereo speaker. And some sneakers. And a beer can. One juicy Replacements story hints that when Twin/Tone was going to release their early records on CD, the band stole as many master tapes as they could and chucked them in the

worship too

by H. Edgar Hix

he sez you show me yrs
an i'll show you mine
so she showed him hers
an he showed her his
then she sez god it's so small
an he sez yeah but
little gods need worship too



calamity jewelz's Golden Calf Awards!

You don't need a reputation if you have enough courage. --Rheft
She's so bad she's good. --Unknown

The Calamitys, as a clan, are really quite gentle. Both branches of the family tree are somewhat eccentric, but, all in all, quite peaceable. Mild, even. Emotions in our tribe run deep, deep, deep. Love, loyalty, respect, and honor flow in the Calamitys' hearts like some elemental power: unceasing, dark and terrible. But it's all

underground. A Calamity's face or voice will seldom betray the storm of feeling that bends, but rarely breaks, his or her will. Only behind triple-locked doors will Calamity family members raise their voices. Even then, the muffled noise of our conflict may sound like someone speaking just a bit louder, as if to reach someone across the room.

We come from both ends of the Mississippi River.

Momma Calamity's folks were from Minnesota; Poppa Calamity's kin, from Mississippi. Strict, unspoken codes of honor and a double-dose of reserve was distilled in me: one part small-town upper-midwest, one part deep rural South. My personal rules of behavior are, to be quite honest, labyrinthine. But anger and passion flow in me, leagues and leagues below the structures of principle and integrity; as deep and wide and strong as the Mississippi river itself.

#1 Steel Magnolia idol: Scarlett

It was Scarlett O'Hara who showed me the glories and risks living in that tremendous, secret current. Not everyone is blessed with an ability to tap into a primal font of base will and strength. I've blocked mine up with cloth and rags and board and chains. I'm afraid of what's down there. Even to let a little trickle of that potent stream seep out--who's to say where it would end? Could I ever plug the hole again? I just rattle the chains now and again, when I get really angry, or when I'm cornered. But Scarlett, by God, she dug her toes into the muddy bank and drank from that raging river daily.

The red earth of her home and the mighty waters of her will sustained her even when the world cracked,

All I Want | by Lena Parker

All I want is to smell you next to me
the mixed scent of
cigarette, sweat, hair, and skin
and sometimes beer too

All I want is your hands
making my waist feel small
making my thighs smooth
making my face beautiful

I like your weight on top of me
it feels more real
Like breaking a vase is more real than
Eyeing it

All I want is to be here a little longer
Maybe then I'll get the extra bit of you
That I need

Maybe if I have one more week
Or two more weeks
Maybe then I'll be satisfied
I'll have had your essence
or something

I wish I could be married for a week
just a week
Then I wouldn't have to wonder
"Are you the one"
I could just be married and happy to
have you

All I want is a Fisherman's fish
Who will give me one
Fisherman's Wife Wish
And I can be the
Sun

ROMEO: Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow,
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops--

JULIET: O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

ROMEO: What shall I swear by?

JULIET: Do not swear at all.
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee.



burned, and fell away. You wouldn't think it, looking at her, that such a silly, manipulative little chit would be able to hoof it out of Atlanta with a sick woman, a newborn baby, and pre-teen girl in tow. You wouldn't think a shallow, selfish, petty *prima donna* would be able to turn her simple, shallow mind to the vagaries of business and drive a lumber mill to incredible, soul-destroying success. You wouldn't think such a vain, callow flirt would find, feel, and lose true love and happiness. But she did! It wasn't pretty. In fact, it was often very ugly indeed. Still, she survived, dragging her weak and principled loved ones behind her. I know she's wicked, but I love her. By God, she did it. She won and lost it all, by the sheer force of her will and wits. My first memory of Gone With the Wind is watching it with Momma Calamity in the sewing room when I was about nine or so. Momma was ironing; I was scratching something in a notepad. Gone With the Wind was playing our black-&-white 18-inch TV. I can still remember the hiss of Momma Calamity's iron, the warm wet smell of the steam, the rustle of the bedcover I sprawled on. I quit doodling after a while and just watched. I was entranced. We didn't speak at all. Momma pressed clothes and I concentrated, open-mouthed. I'd never seen anything like it. At the end, Momma and I started sniffing counterpoint to the puffs of steam from the iron. We were both crying. I remember thinking, is he really going to leave her? Is this it? Is it all over? Is this how it ends? And after Rhett had disappeared into the mist, and Scarlett wept and recalled the red earth of Tara, I turned to Momma Calamity and asked, wiping my sleeve under my nose, "Do you think he's coming back?" And Momma Calamity put down her iron, and said, dabbing her own eyes, "No, honey, I don't think he is."

And that was one of my first conscious revelations that life doesn't always have a happy ending. Sometimes, you can hurt someone so badly, it can't be fixed. Sometimes, sorry isn't enough. Sometimes, it just doesn't work out. And there is always a price to be paid for being strong and wild and selfish--for living in and drinking freely of those dark waters of rage and will. And yet, on the intake of breath following that revelation is this, the counterpoint to the irrevocable: tomorrow is another day. There is always another chance, if you are willing to take it. There is always hope, if you aren't afraid to fail. There

is always a way to survive, if you have the strength to choose it. I admire the ending of Gone With the Wind for its painful, authentic and truthful ambiguity. The only other movie that approaches the same kind of wrenching honesty is Casablanca.

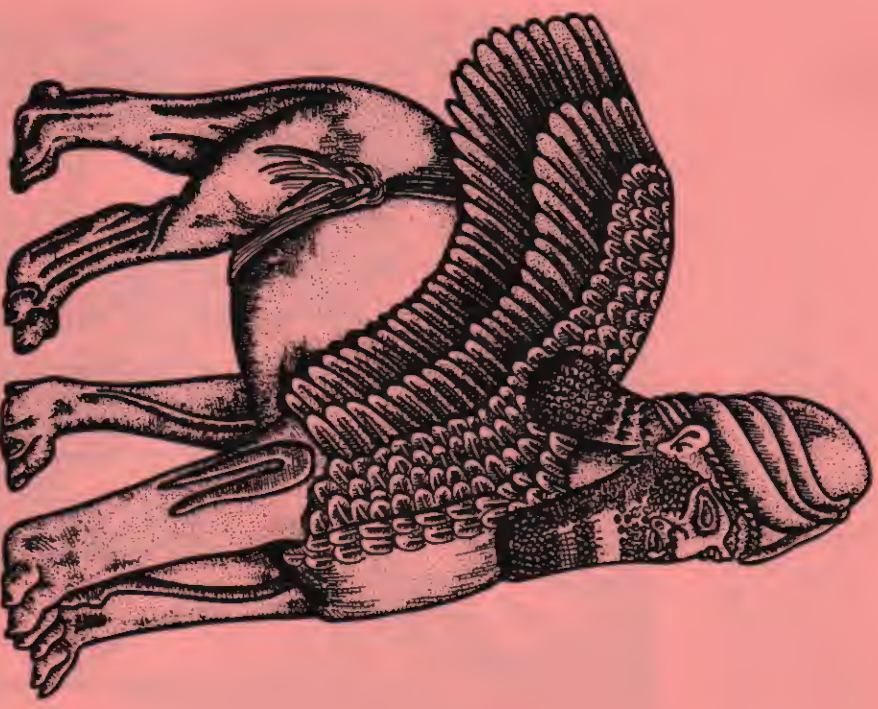
I have to admit I still can't draw directly on my own dark well of power and fury. My own private Mississippi is still unknown and undiscovered. But I have frequently pulled from Scarlett herself for a more moderate, but still potent, draught. During a rough patch at a new job, I listened to Scarlett every day when I booted up my computer. Every morning, I tamped down and wrestled back my own personal feelings of inadequacy and my vicious rage toward a coworker. Every day at 7:30 a.m. Scarlett swore at me: "As God as my witness, they're not going to lick me! If I have to lie, cheat, steal or kill, I'll never be hungry again! No, nor any of my folk! As God as my witness, I'll never be hungry again!" This was remarkably empowering for yours truly.

I like to think of some strange cosmic familial link between Scarlett and the Calamitys. Momma Calamity told me how she wanted to see Gone With the Wind when she was a girl, but Grandfather Calamity forbade it (the swearing and all). So, what did the gentle and intrepid young Momma Calamity do? She visited her big sister in the city and saw it on the sly. That's my Momma! And Poppa Calamity? He didn't see it when it first came out, but waited a few years. It was in San Francisco, during the war, where he was stationed as a sailor. I love to hear Poppa Calamity talk about it. That movie meant something to him. He's a Civil War scholar and an avid reader of American history. He's also a proud Southern man: I can tell he still holds a grudge against Sherman for burning Atlanta. Somehow the red earth of Tara mixed with the rusty earth of Mississippi. Somehow, the rushing waters that Scarlett O'Hara drank and dove in mingled with the groundwater of the Calamity Clan. We share a piece of earth and sky, water and bone, deep down, where souls are forged and broken.

In that boundless place of energy, I honor my sacred strength and my potential for evil. Thank you Katie Scarlett, you bitch, you terror, you wonderful creature. Someday, I'll crack the boards, slip the locks, and pour out a furious libation to you from my wet, rushing soul.

I took a long, slow breath and looked around the room. Maybe it was time for a few changes. No, no maybe, it was time for some changes. The air was a shifting cloud of opium and incense smoke that never managed to cover the smells of the bodies, it only obscured the TV screens. The blare and squawk from the TVs gave me headaches from time to time. The food was always late and usually spoiled.

The acolytes took the body away and heaped it with the others. I curled into the divan and signaled for the remote control. Yes, there were going to be some changes around here, starting tomorrow.



Gods are fragile things; they may be killed by a whiff of science or a dose of common sense.

--Chapman Cohen

The Fool of Idle | by Perseverance

I pulled myself from the couch with a sticky sound. The others continued to lay there but I had to get up. I was the high priest, so it was my job to feed the god.

My throat felt caked with old phlegm and the sores along my back told me that the acolyte assigned to me hadn't been doing his job. I'd have to do something about that. Eventually.

The god lay sprawled across what had once been a red silk divan that had degenerated to a lump of soft, rotted wood and tatters of stuffing. If it were anyone else, his position would have looked like a Renaissance torture, but he managed to look comfortable and relaxed with his spine bent back almost double and one leg twisted brokenly off to the side. It could in fact have been broken; he ignores things like that.

One of the acolytes (I'd long since stopped trying to remember names, or faces, her mottled gray robe marked her as an acolyte) slouched against the wall, a bowl of peeled fruits at her feet. I gestured, she picked up the bowl and slumped over, managing to make it seem like she was carrying lead bars instead of grapes and apples. Probably time to promote her to novice.

I took the bowl and knelt before the god and began to eat, chewing slowly and thoroughly. When I'd finished I murmured the prayer that changed the bowl from something that carried fruit to a proper offering bowl. It looked the same to me, but I suppose the god can tell the difference.

A finger down the throat didn't do much for me anymore. I used the plastic end of a spatula that I told the acolytes and novices to call the Finger of God.

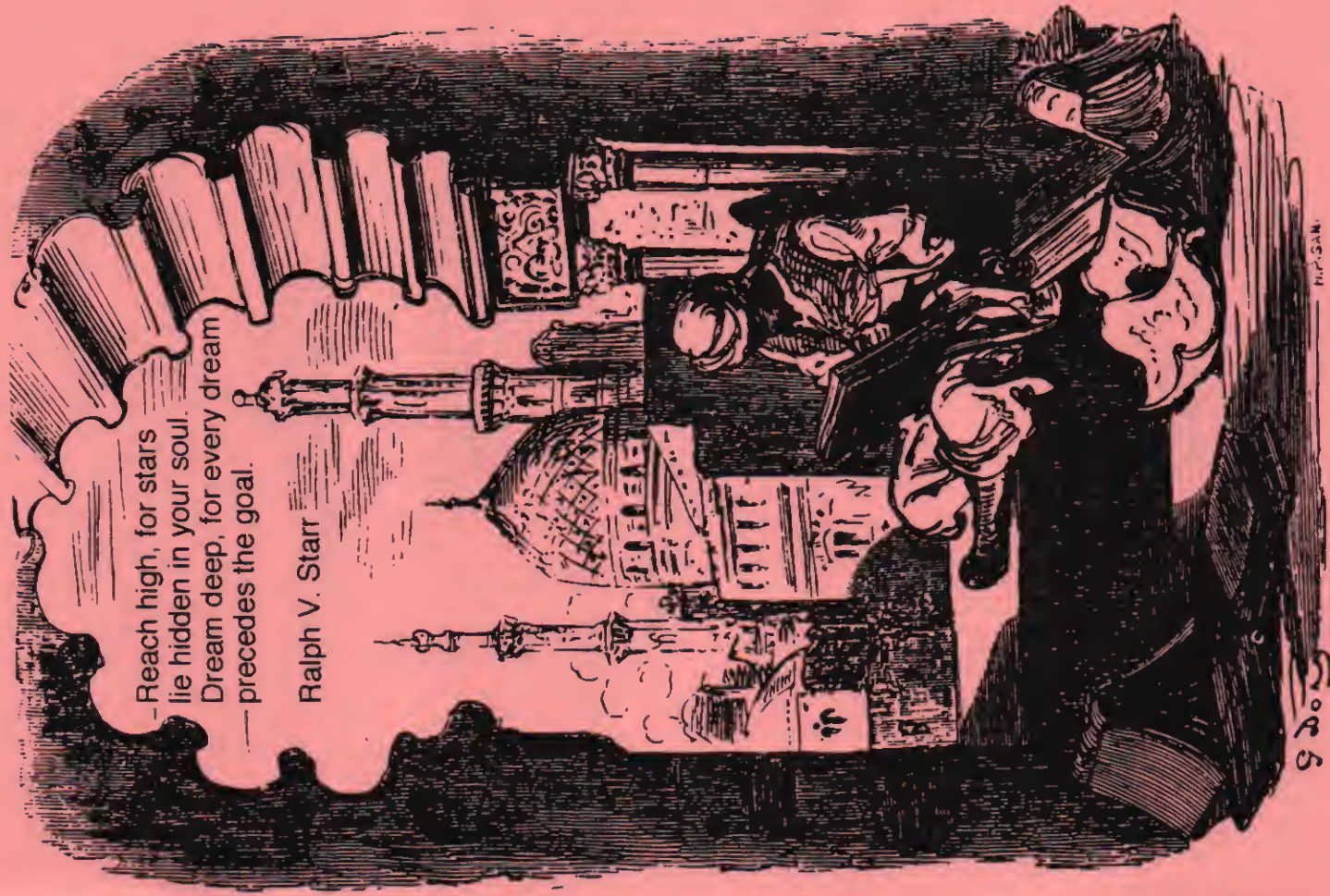
After my heavings had subsided I offered the bowl to the god. He would take it, eat, and then I could go back to the couch with the others and watch re-runs. KVMT was going to start showing old episodes of Mad About You and I was ashamed to admit that I felt a tickle of excitement.

I waited. The bowl started to get heavy in my outstretched arms and my hands were starting to tremble a bit. I began to think unkind thoughts about the god.

Then it came to me in a warm rush, like the first few seconds after you wet yourself. The god was dead. I got to my feet and put the bowl down. I prodded his leg with my bare foot. No response. I waited, looking down at him for a while. I told the acolyte to get some help and clear the body away. She grunted and wandered away.

—Reach high, for stars
lie hidden in your soul.
Dream deep, for every dream
—precedes the goal.

Ralph V. Starr



Being Unreasonable | by R. A. Coldbreath

for my little brother

When I was small I knew
Before I could speak I knew
Before anyone taught me the meaning
Of the word "rational"
There was you.

You don't even feel what I feel
You don't even understand
You thought it was stealing.
How can you steal
What's been yours since before
We first shook hands?

It's "supposed to be," once you're broken
Your heart sets solid, a frozen field.
Throw "supposed to" away.
Unlearn every lie,
Put it by,
Let it go, fucking listen
Be healed.

You sit there and tell me
I'm too late, it's too long
Or that I am wrong,
I still know what I knew.
When I was small,
Before I could talk
Or justify what was inside, there was you.

And you say you can't even feel what I feel
You can't even remember the cause.
You think joy is impossible
And that makes it impossible
To have what you had
When I signed myself "Yours."



To Be Continued...

| unendurable but it can wait | | by leslie h.

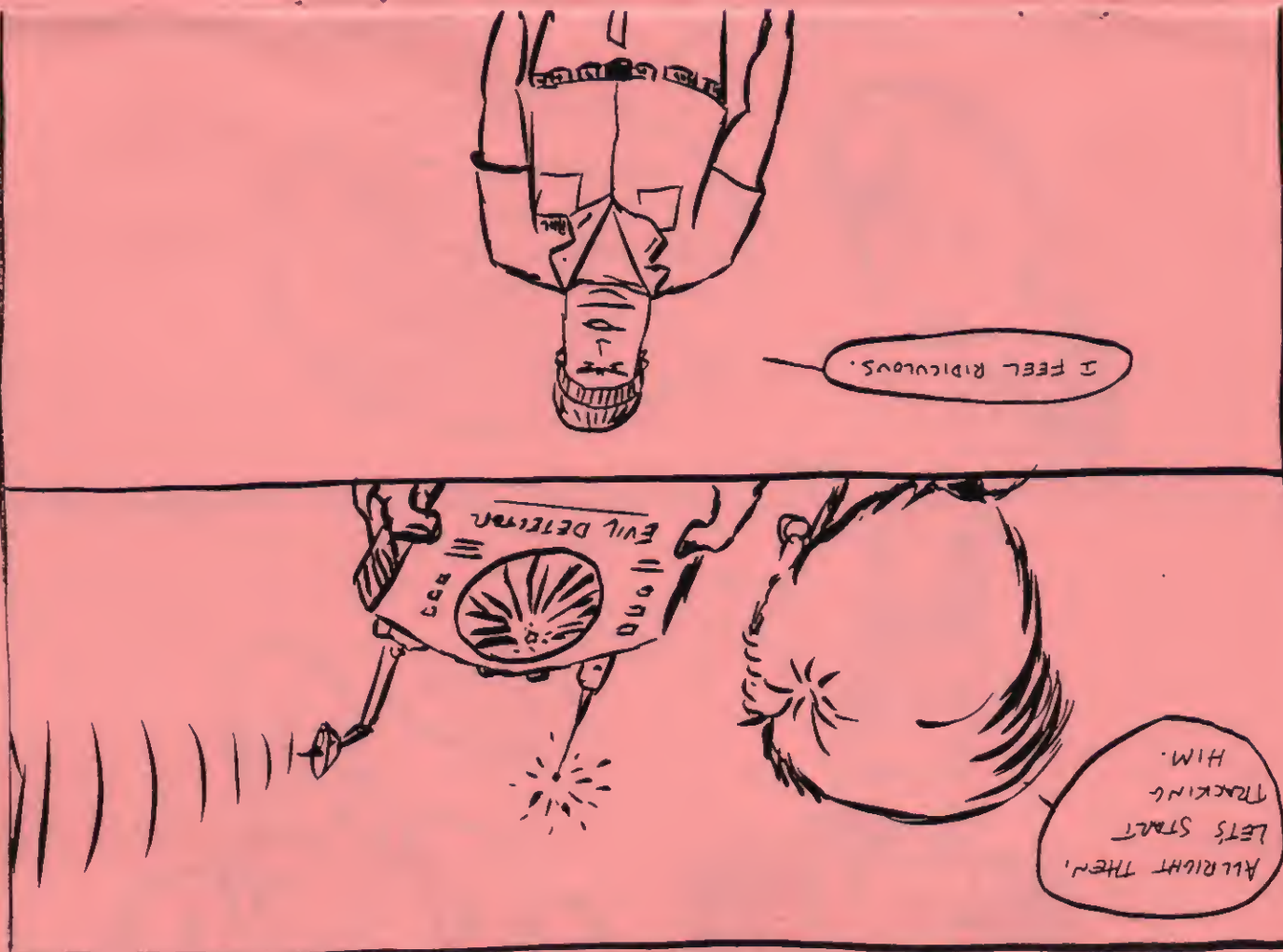
Some people show you glimpses of things, of worlds, you'll never be able to directly experience yourself. Worlds of glamour or privilege, or self-assurance, skill and endurance... worlds of passion and meaning. You touch these people briefly, because they also know their world isn't yours. You can't be a part of it, you can only have a taste, and then they grow bored and restless, and need to leave you, to get back to what's theirs alone.

Jeezus ker-ris-t I can't believe
how long it took me to discover what
I want from this earth.
Everyone else has taken their share --
the love and heat and regard --
and I just worship
his tight ass.

I knew if wanted *this thing* that
I was asking for trouble.
Here, trouble, here, boy. Heel
and kneel
and kneeling, take.

Couldn't resist how he chipped away at the ice around my
mind and heart. Tiny thawings, making it easier to discover
something inside.
It hurt good til it just hurt.

Final meticulously worded offering,
phrased, rephrased,
unheard.



calamity jewelz's Golden Calf Awards!

He hath outsourced the shadow of our night;
 liny and calumny and hate and pain,
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,
 Can touch him not and torture not again.

--Percy Bysshe Shelley, from Adonis

I try to tell you, but I can only say it when we're apart:
 about this storm inside of me, and how I miss your quiet
 heart.
 --the Go-Betweens

I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your
 Loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have
 possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the
 world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will, and
 would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me
 out of it. From no other would I take it.. I will imagine you
 Venus tonight and pray, pray, pray to your star like a
 Heathen. Yours ever, fair Star, John Keats.

--from a letter to Fanny Brawne, July 25, 1819

#1 poetry idol: Keats

Dear John,
 I hope you won't mind me taking the liberty of
 writing, and addressing you familiarly: I know you must
 receive countless letters, billet-doux, and prose-poems,
 burnt upon private altars, cast on moving waters, or
 silently pressed in the pages of lost books. I hope one more
 letter will not be tiresome. But I have wanted to write you
 for some time now, to thank you for your work and your
 words, and, most importantly, for teaching me about
 silence.

I hesitate to speak of it, to anyone--I hope I can
 confide in you. The silence you have engendered in me
 runs so very deep. I trust this mute page might properly
 convey my hushed gratefulness. How can I adequately
 articulate the joy of a still soul, a tranquil heart? Please
 don't misunderstand my reverence for the silence you've



shown me. I know it runs contrary to the bright, sensuous, passionate and vibrant life which infuses your poetry and letters. And somehow, I think it is the underlying quietude, a stillness so vast and sweeping, that supports the bold wonder of your work.

Your turbulent calm is irresistible: the storm of your soul carefully bottled in words, but losing none of its elemental power. John, the stillness at the core of my own heart rang like a singular chime, vibrating endlessly into the world when I first read your work. I know this must sound like the purplest form of praise, but I hope you will understand. That first night, I recited the opening stanza of Ode to a Nightingale over and over to myself on the bus ("My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains / My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, / Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains / One minute past, and Lethwards had sunk..."). The peace and passion of your poem was like looking through the window into the dark night and seeing both my blue-shadowed reflection and the white-frosted tree branches rolling by. Everything was both still and moving; bright and dim, roaring with silence!

I admire and am influenced by many poets: there are books stacked halfway up my walls, piled on my desk, and scattered over my worktable. But you are the one I feel has touched the quiet place in my heart: not just run messy fingers over some of my facets, but truly laid hands on my silent Self. Thank you for that! Your own Self, your troubles and pains and joys are obscured by time and scholarship, now. I can only know you a bit from your poems and letters—even so, I would hate to presume, to assume too much knowledge of you. But I can say you have reached me through the silent carrier of pressed pages, of midnight meditations, of letters, and in touching me, I can reach a steady, open hand back to you. The passage of time, of history, is insignificant. We two can still, and have, touched. Thank you for that. Thank you for a resounding clamor, for blue still waters; for shadowed trees, jewel-toned light and open casements.

I could not be a poet without silence. I have more to tell you, but my heart is full. Till we make contact again--

Your sincere friend,
jewel





Idol Comment | by jean king

gods are like dictionaries
everyone needs one
now and then
a handy reference
for definition
usage
meaning
some are unwieldy
inflexible
cumbersome
others light-weight
portable
soft-spined
they're sold almost everywhere
at reasonable prices
and when not in use
will fit easily
on any shelf



MAN! THERE'S GOTTA
BE A WAY FOR YOU
TO SPEAK TO THEM!
CUZ ONCE ONCE YOU
START TALKING
THEY GOTTA
BELIEVE
YOU!



I WISH I
KNEW HOW?

God Goes Through Hell

The Continuing Comix Adventure by Dan Frye

Our Story So Far,....

In the beginning there was nothing, and God was bored so he made a lot of stuff: Heaven, Earth, angels, people, trees, etc. And it was good.

So instead of nothing there was a lot of stuff.

But then God got bored again. So he created the Randomizer and made Himself mortal for 30 days. Then the Randomizer malfunctioned, stranding God on Earth and His angels had no way of finding Him. And it was bad.

Lucifer found out what was going on and plotted to wage war on Heaven. And that was bad, too.

The angel Azrael, left in charge in God's absence, tried to save Heaven from Lucifer by relocating the Divine Kingdom on Earth. But Azrael, drunk with power, makes plans to kill the rest of the angels and rule both Heaven and Earth. And that was really bad.

Lucifer, thwarted in his plans to invade Heaven and left with an empty Hell devoid of demonic help, is left powerless on Earth. And you'd think that's good but that's bad, too.

Now God and Lucifer are both trapped as mortals on Earth. And, believe it or not, that's good.

**READ ON FOR THE NEXT SPINE-TINGLING
INSTALLMENT!**



